

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
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AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 24284

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE STATUS OF THE UDF

SUMMARY. THE UNION FOR FRENCH DEMOCRACY WAS GISCARD'S LATEST EXPERIMENT TO MOBILIZE NON-GISCARDIAN MAJORITY OPINION AROUND THE IDEAS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE PRESIDENT. JUDGING FROM THE RESULTS OF LAST MARCH'S ELECTIONS AND THE UDF'S FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION (PARIS 22129), THE UDF HAS COME A LONG WAY IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS. AT THE SAME TIME AND JUDGING FROM A JULY 25 CONVERSATION WITH THE UDF'S GENERAL DELEGATE, MICHEL PINTON, THE UDF HAS A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE BECOMING A MASS MOVEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT. THE MOST COMPLIMENTARY ASSESSMENT ONE CAN MAKE AT THIS TIME IS THAT THE UDF LEADERSHIP IS VERY SENSITIVE TO PAST FAILURES IN CREATING A LIBERAL/CENTRIST MOVEMENT AND IS PROCEEDING CAUTIOUSLY IN ORDER NOT TO REPEAT THEM. BUT WITH CANTONAL ELECTIONS ONLY EIGHT MONTHS AWAY, THE UDF DOES NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF UNLIMITED TIME TO MOBI-
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LIZE ITSELF AND ITS ELECTORATE. ITS LONGER-TERM GOAL, THAT OF BECOMING THE DOMINANT PARTY IN FRANCE, IS EVEN MORE AMBITIOUS, IF NOT CHIMERICAL. END SUMMARY.

1. WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED
-- A NATIONAL STRUCTURE. PUTTING TOGETHER A CENTRAL ORGANIZATION AND STAFF WAS, IN PINTON'S OPINION,

THE BIG ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MARCH/JULY PERIOD. THERE IS GOOD BALANCE AMONG THE FOUR CONSTITUENT PARTIES (REPUBLICANS, CENTRISTS, RADICALS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS), WITH REASONABLE REPRESENTATION BY EACH IN POSITIONS WHICH COUNT. LECANUET'S PRESIDENCY IS PROVING QUITE EFFECTIVE, ESPECIALLY IN PULLING ALONG THE REST OF THE CDS WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY QUITE RETICENT ABOUT THE UDF. JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, WHO HAS KEPT A LOW PROFILE SINCE MARCH, IS CONSOLED BY THE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE GUIDING SPIRITS IN LAUNCHING THE UDF. PONIATOWSKI, D'ORNANO AND BONNET, "WHO HAVE MUCH APPEAL AMONG MILITANTS BUT NOT IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC", HAVE REMAINED ON THE SIDELINES, ALLOWING THE UDF TO AVOID THE IMAGE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN NEW CLOTHING AND INSTEAD CAST ITSELF AS A NEW EXPERIMENT.

-- A REGIONAL NETWORK. A PRESIDENT, SECRETARY AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE ARE ALL IN PLACE IN SOME 60 DEPARTMENTS; PROBLEMS EXIST IN 15 OTHERS AND IN 25 DEPARTMENTS THE UDF IS NON-EXISTENT. IN THE FIRST 60 DEPARTMENTS, THERE IS USUALLY ONLY ONE STRONG PARTY, SO THE CHOICE OF OFFICERS HAS BEEN SIMPLE AND LOGICAL. EVEN WHERE SOME OF THE DECISIONS WERE HOTLY DISPUTED, THE QUESTION WAS EVENTUALLY SETTLED TO THE MUTUAL SATISFACTION OF ALL FOUR PARTIES. PROBLEMS EXIST IN THE NEXT 15 DEPARTMENTS BECAUSE AT LEAST TWO CONSTITUENT PARTIES LAY CLAIM TO PREMINENCE IN THE AREA. THE UDF

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LEADERSHIP WILL ATTACK THESE PROBLEMS IN SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER. IN THE LAST 25 DEPARTMENTS, NONE OF THE FOUR CONSTITUENT PARTIES IS PRESENT, AND THE UDF WILL HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH.

-- MEMBERSHIP. 4,000 NEW DIRECT MEMBERSHIPS IN THE UDF ITSELF HAVE BEEN RECEIVED IN PARIS SINCE MARCH, AND ANOTHER 4,000 IN THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS. WHILE NOT A TIDAL WAVE OF ENTHUSIASM, THIS PERFORMANCE, PINTON FELT, WAS NOT TOO BAD WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE UDF STARTED FROM ZERO. IN ADDITION, ONE SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP IN EACH OF THE FOUR COMPONENT PARTIES.

-- PARTY COMMITMENT: PINTON SAID THE UDF HAS NOW ARRIVED AT THE POINT WHERE EACH PARTY SEEMS TO REALIZE IT HAS A STAKE IN THE UDF AND A SELFISH ADVANTAGE IN THE UDF'S FUTURE. FOR THE PR, NEW DIRECT MEMBERSHIPS ARE CONSIDERED A WAY-STATION TO FUTURE PR MEMBERSHIP; FOR THE CDS AND RADICALS, THE NEW MEMBERSHIPS DILUTE THE WEIGHT OF THE PR AND GIVE THEM ALL A LARGER SLICE OF A LARGER PIE. THEY BOTH ALSO SEE THE UDF AS A VEHICLE FOR MOVING THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY AWAY FROM THE CONSERVATISM OF THE PR. WHILE THE CDS OF COURSE HOLDS THE

PRESIDENCY (LECANUET), ALL PARTIES EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (PARAS 2 AND 3)

GRAB OTHER SPOILS AS THE STRUCTURE GROWS.

2. WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE:

-- A CAMPAIGN FOR NEW MILITANTS WILL START
IN SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER TO FLESH OUT THE VARIOUS TRUCTURES
ALREADY IN PLACE. THIS APPROACH, ACCORDING TO PINTON,
IS WHAT DISTINGUISHES THE UDF FROM THE PR. HE CHARAC-
TERIZED GISCARD AS HESITANT AFTER HIS ELECTION
IN 1974 AND THE PR AS FOSSILIZED AFTER THOSE ELECTIONS.
THE PRESIDENT IS NOW MORE DECISIVE AND COMMITTED TO THE
IDEA OF CREATING A MOVEMENT, HE CONTINUED, AND THE UDF
INTENDS TO RALLY NEW MEMBERS WHO WERE NOT REACHED BY
THE PR -- OR FOR THAT MATTER, BY THE OTHER THREE PAR-
TIES. THESE ARE OFTEN PEOPLE WHO DO NOT IDENTIFY WITH
ANY OF THE CONSTITUENT PARTIES BUT WHO ARE ATTRACTED
BY THE PRESIDENT'S GOALS OF REFORM, SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT
AND RECONCILIATION WITH THE MODERATE LEFT.

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-- THROUGH THIS CAMPAIGN, THE UDF INTENS TO RE-CREATE A DYNAMIC WHICH PINTON SAID HAS BEEN FALTERING SINCE APRIL. THE UDF WAS SURPRISINGLY SUCCESSFUL IN THE MARCH ELECTIONS AND BENEFITTED FROM THE PRESIDENT'S VICTORY, BUT HE ADMITTED THAT THE UDF HAS BEEN SUFFERING SINCE THEN FROM THE GENERAL DEMOBILIZATION AND POLITICAL FATIGUE OF THE PUBLIC. ONLY SIX MONTHS SEPARATE THE FALL FROM THE MARCH CANTONAL ELECTIONS, A NONE TOO LONG LENGTH OF TIME TO PREPARE THE UDF FOR ITS SECOND BIG TEST. (THERE HAS BEEN SOME SPECULATION ABOUT DELAYING THE CANTONALS UNTIL SEPTEMBER IN ORDER TO AVOID TWO ELECTIONS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1979. PINTON SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER HAVE DECIDED TO LEAVE THIS DECISION TO THE PARLIAMENT, SINCE A CHANGE IN THE LAW WOULD BE NECESSARY).

3. QUESTIONS TO BE RESOLVED: SO MUCH FOR THE THEORY AND THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE FALL. BUT PINTON IS ALSO QUITE REALISTIC ABOUT THE PROBLEMS THE UDF FACES AND THE PITFALLS WHICH STAND IN ITS WAY BEFORE IT BECOMES A POWERFUL MOVEMENT.

-- WHILE MANY PARTY LEADERS ARE STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF PRESERVING PARTY IDENTITY, PINTON IS CLEARLY PARTISAN OF WHAT HE CALLS "UNITARY ACTION", EVENTUALLY LEADING TO A FUSION OF THE FOUR PARTIES. THE VARIOUS POLITICAL TRADITIONS WILL HAVE THEIR PLACE, HE CONCEDES, BUT MORE IN TERMS OF CURRENTS SUCH AS EXIST WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY (THOUGH MMLE COHERENT THAN IN THE PS, HE HASTENS TO ADD) RATHER THAN AS SEPARATE PARTIES. LECANUET IS VERY CLOSE TO THIS VIEW (BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN PROMISED THE PRESIDENCY OF THE FUTURE, FUSED ORGANIZATION?), BUT MANY OTHERS, ESPECIALLY RADICALS, RANGE FROM

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COOL TO HOSTILE TO THIS IDEA. IF FUSION IS PUSHED TOO FAR TOO FAST, THE RISK OF A BREAK IN THE UDF WILL INCREASE.

-- UDF LEADERS DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF THEIR ELECTORAL GOALS. ARE THEY AFTER THE RPR ELECTORATE, THE MODERATE PS AND MRG OR THE FLOATING ELECTORATE? PINTON SAYS IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL; THEY HAVE NOT YET ANALYZED THE 8,000 NEW MEMBERS TO KNOW WHERE THEY CAME FROM. ONE THEORY IN THE UDF ADVOCATES GOING AFTER THE DISAPPOINTED SOCIALISTS, ANOTHER AFTER THOSE WHO IDENTIFY WITH THE PRESIDENT BUT WITHOUT WANTING TO JOIN

A PARTICULAR PARTY. PINTON CHARACTERIZES THE UDF AS THE CENTER RATHER THAN AS THE CENTER-LEFT, PRESUMABLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS FROM ANY QUARTERS. THE RPR, PARENTHETICALLY, MAKES NO BONES ABOUT BELIEVING IT IS THE PRIVILEGED TARGET OF THE UDF.

-- PINTON PREDICTED THAT THERE WILL BE UDF (RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL PARTY) CANDIDATES FOR THE CANTONALS. THERE WILL CERTAINLY BE SOME DISPUTES AMONG RIVALS AND OBJECTIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO REFUSE TO GIVE UP THEIR FORMER PARTY LABELS, BUT THESE SHOULD NOT AMOUNT TO MORE THAN TEN PERCENT, HE ESTIMATED. ONCE THIS HURDLE HAS BEEN CROSSED, THE UDF WILL TURN TO THE TASKS OF CONSTITUTING ITS EC LIST, AND HERE AGAIN IT WILL RELY MAINLY ON UDF PEOPLE. PINTON WAS NOT OVERLY INTERESTED IN INCLUDING LIBERAL GAULLISTS ON THE OUTS WITH CHIRAC, SUCH AS CHABAN-DELMAS AND GUICHARD, ON THE UDF LIST. HE FELT THAT RAIDING OPERATION ON THE RPR WOULD ONLY BE WORTHWHILE IF THE RPR CONTINGENT AMOUNTED TO ONE-FOURTH OF THE LIST. OTHERWISE, IT WOULD BE SEEN BY THE PUBLIC AS A TACTICAL MANEUVER. SELECTION OF BOTH CANTONAL AND EC CANDIDATES, PINTON CONCLUDED, WILL REQUIRE DELICATE BALANCING AMONG THE PARTIES AS WELL AS

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AN OVERRIDING CONCERN FOR THE BEST QUALIFIED.
--GIVEN THE CLOSE ASSOCIATION OF THE UDF WITH GISCARD, WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES ON THE PARTY OF A DROP IN THE PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY? AFTER ALL THE

PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH AND AMY WELL DIP SOME TIME IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS. PINTON ADMITTED THIS WAS A PROBLEM BUT LESS SO AS MORE TIME PASSES AND AS THE UDF PICKES UP STRENGTH. THE GOAL OF THE UDF, WHILE CAUTIOUS IN THE SHORT TERM, IS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY WHILE IT IS HIGH AND OF HIS PRESENCE IN THE ELYSEE FOR AS LONG AS HE IS THERE, IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE SHOCK OF HIS DEPARTURE WHEN THAT OCCURS--AND BE ABLE TO CARRY ON AFTERWARDS MUCH AS THE GUALLIST PARTY HAS SINCE 1969.

4. CONCLUSION: PINTON (AND THE PRESIDENT) CAN POINT WITH SOME PRIDE TO THE UDF'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DAT AND CAN EVEN HOPE WITH GOOD REASON THAT THE UDF WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. NEVERTHELESS, PINTON'S CONVERSATION IS MARKED WITH RESERVE. HE IS OPERATING AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF CONFIDENTIAL

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A SERIES OF UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO UNITE OR COORDINATE THE CENTER OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS. AND HE IS DOING SO WITH MANY OF THE SAME LEADERS WHO, BECAUSE OF PERSONAL RIVALRIES, FAILED IN THESE EFFORTS. THIS BACKGROUND EXPLAINS WHY EQUILIBRIM OR BALANCE IS A KEY CONCEPT IN THE UDF'S PRESENT ORGANIZATIONAL STAGE AND WHY THE CHOICE OF CANTONAL AND EC ELECTION CANDIDATES NEXT YEAR WILL BE TWO IMPORTANT TESTS OF THE UDF'S COHESION.

5. GRADUALLY AS UDF LEADERS MAY WANT TO PROCEED, THE PARTY WILL HAVE TO MOVE INTO HIGH GEAR IF IT IS SERIOUS ABOUT BECOMING A MASS MOVEMENT. ITS ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND ARE ADMITTEDLY A FIRST NECESSARY STEP TO HIGHER AMBITIONS. BUT IN THEMSELVES THEY CARRY NO GUARANTEE OF MOVING BEYOND THE UDF'S OWN PEOPLE TO A DESIRED MEMBERSHIP OF A COUPLE OF HUND THOUSAND. PINTON'S ADMISSION OF A UDF SLUMP SINCE APRIL IS A SIGN OF HEALTHY REALISM ON HIS PART. THE CAMPAIGN BEGINNING THIS FALL TO SOLICIT NEW, DIRECT MEMBERSHIPS WILL PROVIDE THE FIRST INDICATIONS, EVEN BEFORE THE CANTANOLS, OF THE UDF'S SUCCESS OR LACK OF THEREOF IN TRANSLATING THE PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY INTO AN EFFECTIVE POLITICAL MOVEMENT.
HARTMAN

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